

Gravity Hill



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Gravity Hill

magazine

EMILY THRELKELD, Editor

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TED WOJTASIK, Advisor

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Dedicated to

Sarah
Amy
Perry
Kyle
Richie
Noel
Elise
Alexa
Ashley
Alexis
Blake
Dustin

Chris
Stephanie
and
Kate

for Tirolo, Firenze, Venezia, Roma
and everything in between.

Contents

Students

Words

Jake Anderson	
Frost Giants	10
Alexis Baker	
Chemistry	18
Full Circle	19
Troy Baranik	
<i>(Haiku)</i>	20
Kurt Fenderbosch	
Mackin' Kurt	20
Bryant Ferrell	
Regrets	21
Gregory Gray	
Little Hands	22
Carrie Danielle Jones	
<i>(Haiku)</i>	23
Stephanie Kjelgaard	
Ringmaster	24
William E. Loftus	
<i>(Haiku)</i>	24
Laura McDowell	
Winter	26
Liz Monish	
Muscadine Wine	28
On A Temperate Fall Morning	29

Tracey Natoli	
Iall	29
Galina Podolsky	
Ending Wishes	30
A Mother's Song	30
Matt Poletti	
Blue Sky	31
Marina Richardson	
You Always Want What You Can't Get	32
Ben Solomon-Stephens	
<i>(Haiku)</i>	33
Justin Ihoby	
Epiphany	33
Epiphany II	34
As We Go Our Separate Ways	34

Images

Alexis Goldman	
Grape Drank	17
Lisa Garber	
Vernazza, Italy	25
Liz Windham	
Three Musketeers	35
Lisa Garber	
Cape Sounion, Greece	41
Dustin Lisica	
Curious George	59
Sarah Karas	
You're Dead	60

Alumni

Words

Debi Hobbs	
Child's Play	36
Narrow Bridge	36
Seventeen	37
Caitlin Johnson	
(Novel Part II)	38
Magic	38
Excerpt: Emanuelle Falls Out of a Tree	39
Kimberly Neal	
Epitaph	42
Three Views	43
Professor Margaret Snow Houston	44
Dan Paraka	
Breathe	46
Marty Silverthorne	
Hurricane Floyd	44
Make Believe Boxcar	48
Margaret Mason Tate	
20/20	49

Images

Jennifer Bruner	
St. Andrews Snow	52

Faculty & Staff

Words

Thomas Heffernan	
Concerning Liam (circa 1745)	50

Ronald H. Bayes	
Review: The Blood Doll Labyrinth	52
Ryan Thompson	
Winter	55

Community

Words

Whit Griffin	
The First of The Dew	56
Peter McNamara	
From The King of the World	57
Joe C. Miller	
Pain	61
Jason Mosser	
Salvage	62
Bruce Whealton	
The Ghost of a Poem	64

You are holding in your hands the fifth edition of St. Andrews' student literary magazine. Since its first issue in 2005, *Gravity Hill* has been dedicated to presenting the best work from students, alumni, faculty, staff, and friends of the college.

Putting together the best work possible for this issue was a task I took very seriously, and I was fortunate enough to have help along the way. I'd like to offer a thank you to everyone who submitted, and a special thanks to:

Justin Thoby for holding down the fort while I ran away to Italy.

Tim Van Hooser for always having a smile for everyone, no matter what time of day it is.

Caitlin Johnson, for her patience, and Margaret Mason Tate, whose taste I can always count on. I'm not the first editor to thank either one of these ladies, which is a credit to how great they are.

Ted Wojtasik for being the best proofreader imaginable, and the funniest to boot.

Finally, I'd like to offer congratulations to this year's prize winners:

Bryant Ferrell

Editor's Choice Award

Laura McDowell

Nancy Bradberry Award, for the best poem in traditional rhyme or meter

Troy Baranik

Marie Gilbert Award, for the best poem about a beach

Enjoy this issue, and don't forget to submit something to us for the next one.

Emily Threlkeld

Editor

Jake Anderson

Frost Giants

Osligath, Gell and Shump huddled together and frowned at the three hooded strangers gathered around the small fire. It had been two weeks since these elves had first approached them, offering to teach the giants how to make fire in exchange for their services as guides.

"Tell Gell again, why we help little strange elf creatures?"

"Because strange elf creatures give us secret of fire and we get back into tribe." A thump and a growl made the two giants turn to their companion; he had buried his stone club in a bank of snow.

"Quiet, Shump, we not harm them."

"Gell starting to agree with Shump, why not steal secret and eat elf creatures? They stink of evil things. No good come from helping them."

10

"No eating elf creatures or I throw you in ocean."

"Humph, elf creatures nothing but bones anyway. No good except for toothpick," Gell muttered under his breath. The three giants watched their future benefactors until the sun set. Dawn came again and the three giants continued to lead the elves in a northwesterly direction through the snow. As they drew nearer to their destination, Shump began to grumble and grunt.

"What he grumbling about now?"

"Shump want to know what evil, stinking, elf creatures want with dragon, " said Gell. Osligath shrugged his mammoth shoulders and continued walking.

"How I supposed to know? It don't matter as long as elves keep promise."

Suddenly, Osligath stopped and held back the others with a massive arm. "I smell ice demon stink," he growled.

Shump whimpered and crouched behind Gell. "Shump no like demons and Gell agree, what we do?"

"They far off yet," said Osligath. "We keep going, but keep eyes open." The leader of the elves was looking at Osligath with suspicion in his eyes. Osligath explained the situation to them as best he could in the common tongue. The elves immediately drew their bows and began looking around warily.

The party continued on into a narrow ravine, and had only gone a few feet when the walls began to tremble and a small avalanche blocked the road behind them. One of the elves shouted in their native tongue, and the others raised their bows, drew the arrows back to their cheek and began chanting in ancient elfish. Osligath rushed forward toward the ravine's exit, but a band of ice demons pushed icy boulders into the ravine and blocked any chance of escape and nearly crushing Osligath in the process.

"Cursed ice demons, come down and let me smash you!" roared Osligath. Shump bared his teeth and shook his club at the multitude of icy, spider-like fiends on the chasm walls.

11

Meanwhile the tips of the elves' arrows had magically burst into flame and they were now firing them at the canyon walls. As Osligath watched, the hordes of frozen demons fell screeching in pain as flames seared their skin. They scurried about in the snow, trying desperately to put out the flames.

Osligath took only a moment before raising his club and charging the bewildered fiends, smashing them into the rocks with fist and club alike. The other two followed suit with loud roars until all the ice demons were defeated or had retreated into the snow. The battle was over only moments after it had begun. The g'ants went to work clearing the blocked ravine, tossing the boulders aside with loud grunts and snorts. Soon the path was clear and the strange little party was underway again.

A few hours later the sky began to darken and the wind began to howl as it whipped the surrounding snow into a

flurry of cold, white flakes. It became so bad that Osligath and the others couldn't see what was in front of them. He turned as the others caught up with him.

"Bad snowstorm, we stop here and wait it out," he shouted, but his voice was nearly drowned out by the fury of the storm. The troupe sat with their backs to each other and waited. After a few moments one of the elves shouted in the common tongue.

"Something is moving out there!" Weapons sprung instantly into frozen hands, as a wave of ice demons assailed the weary travelers. Arrows flew and clubs bashed as the defenders repelled the onslaught. The assault continued until well into the evening hours when the storm finally dissipated and the exhausted band was finally able to continue their expedition.

The rest of the journey was uneventful and they made quick progress, despite being cold and tired. The only obstacle that remained was a large, frozen lake. Osligath stopped the group at the edge of the lagoon.

"We rest here; ice is very thin in middle. I take elves at first light. Gell and Shump wait here until we return."

"Why we wait? We cross too." A growl resonated in Osligath's throat.

"You wait, I cross. Three of us too heavy, ice breaks and we fall in water. Understand?" Gell crossed his arms stubbornly, but nodded in compliance while Shump frowned and scratched his head.

"We stay," Gell said to the other giant, who finally nodded. The elves set up their tents around a fire, while the three giants buried themselves in the snow.

Osligath stood before the tribal chieftain and the three elders with his head hung low, Gell and Shump stood to either side with their hands and feet bound by long, thick cords. The first elder spoke.

"You stand here because you and your friends attack chief's son with no reason and start fighting among own tribe." Osligath shuffled his feet and continued to stare at the earth. He had had a reason. The chief's son had taunted Shump into throwing a punch in order to justify beating Shump senseless. Osligath had stepped in for Shump and Gell had only joined the fracas to keep the chief's son's cronies at bay. The second elder continued.

"That is why we send you three into exile until you can prove to us you are useful member of tribe."

Night changed into day, and pale red sun rose above the horizon as Osligath emerged from the snow. He had had that same dream every night since they had been cast out. He caught Gell looking at him and returned the gaze until Gell looked away and stood up. The elves had already awoken and packed and were now standing impatiently by the edge of the lake. Osligath grabbed his few possessions and the silent party began their trek across the treacherous, frozen terrain.

The ice creaked under Osligath's weight, but held firm. The elves walked warily a few steps behind. The farther they got onto the open ice, the more the chill wind nipped at their noses. Osligath shuddered as a strong gust stood his back hairs on end and the elves drew their fur-lined cloaks tighter to their thin bodies.

As they reached the middle, the ice suddenly gave way beneath Osligath's feet and he plunged into the icy water below. The elves leapt back to avoid following him in as the ice split underneath their feet. Osligath spluttered and flailed his arms frantically in order to keep his head above the icy water. The elves stood and watched as Osligath scrambled to shore and clawed his way back onto solid ice and shook himself dry, covering the elves in a shower of ice particles.

"We go this way," he said pointing off to the right. Osligath

gath led the elves around the middle of the lake to circumvent the large area of thin ice. It was well into midmorning before they reached the end of the lake and found themselves staring at the foreboding entrance to a cave.

Osligath gave a questioning glance towards the elfin leader, who nodded in response. Osligath took a deep breath and stepped into the opening. The air was slightly warmer than outside due to the lack of wind chill and Osligath released the breath he had been holding. He motioned for the elves to follow and made his way deeper into the cavern.

Their footsteps rang eerily in the stony silence, a silence made all the more sinister by the dimly lit corridors. Gradually, the path sloped upwards until they emerged onto a rocky outcropping circling a mountain. Osligath looked up towards the mountain peak and their final destination and a shiver ran down his spine.

14

The path up the mountain was barely wide enough for a single person to tread. Osligath continued to lead the way, with his back pressed against the side of the mountain and his jaw set in a stubborn grimace. After some time, Osligath ventured a look downwards and immediately wished he had not. The ground was no longer visible and a slight breeze made him grasp the mountainside. He swallowed the lump in his throat and continued on his way, refusing to look down.

Osligath stepped onto the plateau gratefully, until he realized where he was. The entrance to a dragon's lair was no safer than the narrow ridge he had traversed to get there. The elves stepped onto the plateau beside him and waited patiently. Osligath sighed and moved closer to the lair's entrance before cautiously poking his head in.

The dragon was sleeping soundly and failed to notice his presence in its domain. Osligath slowly backed out of the entrance. The dragon was easily a hundred times his size

and covered in hard white scales from the tip of its horned head to the tip of its lashing tail. Large, leathery wings draped around its body failed to hide the deadly talons beneath, or the razor sharp teeth in its long snout.

The lead elf pushed past Osligath to get a better look at the dragon, then turned to the others and shook his head.

"This is not the one," he said drawing a long, thin blade from underneath his cloak, "but we should dispose of it anyway. We can not have it alerting its kin to our presence." The elf's blade shimmered in the fading light as the lead elf advanced towards the slumbering reptile and carefully positioned the point of the blade over the dragon's skull between the eyes.

The dragon, sensing danger, pulled its head away at the last minute and swatted the elf aside with one sweep of its scaled claw. The other elves released a volley of arrows and angered the beast further. It leapt on them with a roar and Osligath was knocked aside by its whip-like tail. His club clattered to the ground and he was thrown, head first, into a wall.

Osligath groaned, staggered to his feet and made his way towards the exit. He had no desire to test his strength against a dragon. He was barely aware of the elves continuing struggle with the beast, but was only concerned with his own escape. He had made it to the plateau when the dragon pounced from behind and grabbed his arms in its talons as they hurled over the cliff. The dragon recovered itself, with Osligath still clenched in its talons and began to circle over the pond and back towards its lair.

A sudden lurch as the dragon turned caused Osligath to look up; one of the elves had managed to bury their sword in the monster's chest. Osligath used the last of his strength to swing his feet upwards and thrust the blade further into the dragon's chest. It roared in pain as it released Osligath from its grip and they both plummeted into the icy waters

below.

Two pairs of hands pulled Osligath up from the icy depths and smacked him hard on the back as he spewed out water.

"Osligath had Gell and Shump worried. What happen to elf creatures?" Osligath coughed, and then shook his head.

"They all dead." Gell frowned as Osligath stood up.

"Then we no get fire secret?"

"No, no fire secret."

"What we do?"

"We go home, find another way to rejoin tribe," said Osligath turning his back on the lake's distant shore and trudged southwards towards their home.



17

Alexis Goldman

Grape Drank
(Pencil)

Alexis Baker

Chemistry

He's sitting one row up
and a table to the left of me,
closer to the board because
the teacher writes too small and
he needs a new prescription for his glasses.

I've only seen them a few times
when he turns to flirt with
the girl who sits beside me.

18

She doesn't notice, but
they always slip to the tip
of his upturned nose,
showing off his eyes, which have
flickering groups of hopeful green here
and speckles of dead brown and yellow there,
like leaves at the end of summer.

At least once during their conversation
he'll poke out that wicked tongue of his
and coat it with a thin film of spit.

It makes me squirm in my chair
every time I see him do it.

I wonder when we'll finally give up
on people we can't have.

Full Circle

Tiny black ants pick up
pieces of the squished toad
on the already dirty sidewalk.
A straight line to the nest is formed by
happily burdened workers eager to
get home for their gruesome feast.
There is a flash of red as one disappears
inciting panic, scrambling
chaos among his fellow gatherers.

Nearby, a frog licks it lips.

Troy Baranik

(Haiku)

The golden sun beat
down heavily as the harsh
waves crashed on the shore.

20

Kurt Fenderbosch

Mackin' Kurt

There once was a boy named Kurt.
And all the girls said he was a flirt.
Is that even bad?
I'm just like my dad—
So some women end up getting hurt.

Bryant Ferrell

Regrets

Autumn is here
and the leaves begin to fall,
slowly at first,
but more quickly as time goes on,
and all the while
you stand in the yard with a rake
waiting to push the leaves
into the burn pile,
and watch the leaves
disappear with the smoke.

Gregory Gray

Little Hands

I've tried so long and so hard
to write a poem for you.
Scribbled in my mind a thousand times over.
Catching the wind is easier
Than finding words worthy of you.
But you never needed any.
Your face is a poem,
Your eyes, your little hands.
The way you enter a room.
I remember when I looked upon you and saw the sun.
To hell with sonnets.

Carrie Danielle Jones

(Haiku)

stray leaves fall upon
the rush of a waterfall
plunge like shooting stars

Stephanie Kjelgaard

Ringmaster

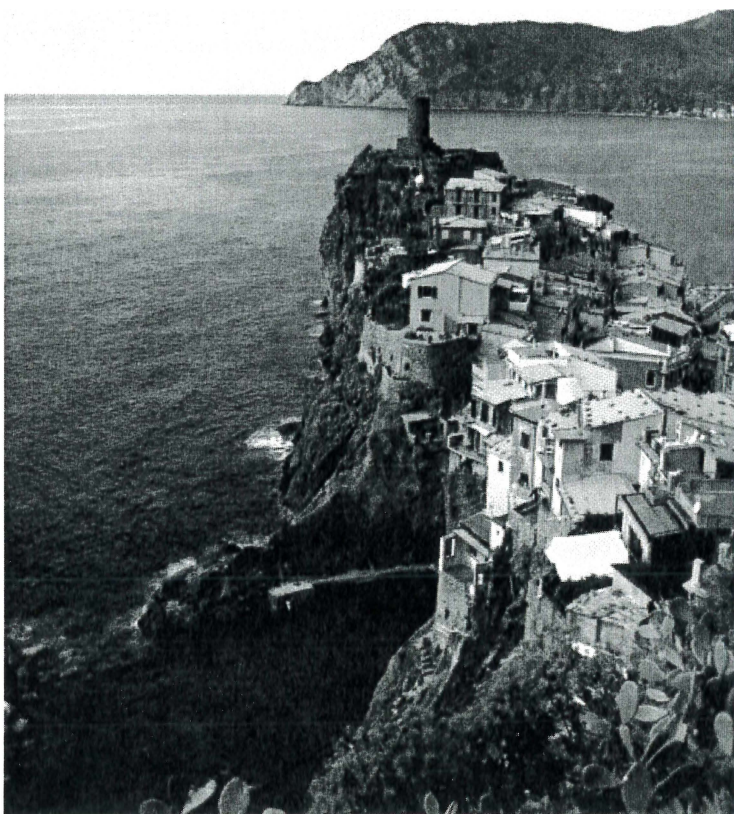
23

was going
to see you
this weekend,
but people found out.
I'm the ringmaster of popular'ty.
Fuck plans, fuck desires.
The only show
I want:
you.

William E. Loftus

(Haiku)

climbing is movement
your body understanding
rocks guide the path up



25

Lisa Garber
Vernazza, Italy
(Photograph)

Laura McDowell

Winter

Do you remember that last thing you said?
Less like a promise, more a summary.
Your postscript, Oh Achilles—for my winter,
This Solstice, me from you, my Stonehenge patter.
Stained sea-glass now becoming crystal'd water
From your secluded Greenland into mine.

But I have hopes, more than just for winter
For something you had once said was mine.
While your “cold breath be rude” in fact, in summary,
I feel that weight your words have more than said.
“Ass you like it” —I see this sort of pattern—
The wind as to the sky as to the water.

26

This Yuletide dripping candle of a pattern
To melt Aurora into rain and water.
In polar ponds and beaches, I will mine
In search of ornamental shells of winter.
Bedecking things I likely should have said
I glean adjectives, nouns of ice and look to summary.

Christened, now my life is blood and water,
My pulse and breaths and smiles tear a pattern
Scripting into carols to be said.
“Miles to go”—my summary.
Christmas sleeps below the heat of winter

And I will etch away the hopes not mine

I didn't set us out to be a summary
Of all the hurts and chills you found in winter.
I'd hoped we could create for us a pattern
But you filled my dreams with chilling things you said.
I'm frozen now—the pain I thought was mine—
My lungs—my hopes of love of me—cold water—

My Poseidon, I still wish that I was mine
That I wasn't just a stack of what you said.
You carved me out of glass and now I'm water
Slipping down like diamonds dead of winter.
There's nothing more to be, my Noël summary
I trace my crimson tracks behind, my pattern.

Liz Monish

Muscadine Wine

I have never been an epicurean of Muscadine grapes,
nor have I been a connoisseur of the wine,
but something reminiscent hides in the smell
and reminds me of the crimson and gold leaves of au-
tumn's past,
rock candy at the farmers' market,
corn mazes and hay rides.
A first kiss in a vine-covered gazebo
as the sun sets,
and a dust-covered bottle of homemade wine
underneath the front seat
of a rusty pickup truck.

On A Temperate Fall Morning

A mile of fishermen,
casting their lines into the surf,
and I, wondering,
is there a competition?

Naw, honey,
it's just a good day for fishin'.

Tracey Natoli

Tall

29

There once was a boy from Nepal
Who stood nearly nine feet tall.
To enter a door
Was quite a chore
So he always just went through the wall.

Galina Podolsky

Ending Wishes

Just like a sick dog doesn't wag its tail in joy,
No sullen soul sings to anyone.
We're all born with a gift,
To be of worth, to work, sign off our lives,
To make a mark on life.
Admit guests in your soul, don't make it desolate.
Take wonder in life.

30

A Mother's Song

I feel hollow, care for me, hold me...
My son, do not starve yourself.
I am ill, before long I'll be walking towards an end.
I am hollow, very soon I'll make my big debut,
and let my soul feel glee.

Matt Poletti

Blue Sky

I was out walking when time decided to slow down.
The breeze washed over my face,
Some leaves blew unhurriedly across the ground,
Stopping occasionally to ponder me.

I looked up
And saw some birds winging overhead.
There, the sun and moon hung,
Two beautiful gems in the sky.

Three dragonflies
Danced in the air,
Flying in a circle,
Fast, forming a halo.

All at once, under the fair blue sky,
For the span of a moment,
I felt connected to Emerson's spirit.
The cosmos and I were one.

A bad day changed in an instant,
As do all things in life.

Marina Richardson

You Always Want What You Can't Get

You always want what you can't get
You try your hardest to reach out and grab it,
If it never comes to you, make a bet.

To bargain your way to reaching it,
To see if someone will give it to you,
You always want what you can't have.

A person always tries their hardest to go that extra step,
Seeing if they will actually succeed, but
If it never comes to you, make a bet.

32

When you realize that your goal is running from you,
You think about giving up, facing the fact that
You always want what you can't have.

When all your thoughts come to one,
Straighten up and realize that you can't let yourself down,
If it never comes to you, make a bet.

Finally you realize that the world is just testing you,
That it's all part of some game:
You always want what you can't get,
If it never comes to you, make a bet.

Ben Solomon-Stephens

(Haiku)

A prickly cactus
in the dry summer desert
stands alone, alone.

Justin Thoby

Epiphany

Somewhere between
The poorly written lines
Of ill-fated songs
And redundant images
Of a woman
Dancing
On water
I decided not to be a poet
Because a poet's mind must wander
And mine is too often trapped
In one place or another.

Epiphany II

Then again,
There 's more than one way
To dance.

34

As We Go Our Separate Ways

Just do me this favor:
Keep the little bits
Of me
That I have left behind
If only because I cannot bear
To part with you
Completely.



35

Liz Windham

Three Musketeers
(India ink)

Debi Hobbs

Child's Play

With sticks, in the dirt
we marked roads and traffic lights,
drew straws to be cop.

36

Narrow Bridge

Sharp word

Angry stare

Slammed door

Long silence

Steak and potatoes

Warm beer

Grocery-store roses

No card

Seventeen

On viewing Vermeer's painting *The Girl With the Red Hat*
(c. 1665)

She hears them laugh and turns to look,
Her eyes black pearls that catch the light.
Her borrowed earrings, glistening tears,
Brush cheeks of supple ivory skin.
Her nose and mouth, not delicate,
The countenance a boy might wear.
And on her head, a feathered hat
Bold poppy red, beyond her years.
She rises, leaves, and longs to find
Familiar shadows, sweet, and deep.

Caitlin Johnson

(Novel Part II)

The way has always been there before,
But now I've gone & lost my atlas.
I'm stuck on the pavement you know.
& yeah, I told you I loved
New roads, but
That was before I found out
How you drive,
& I swear you're giving me bad directions.

38

Magic

I almost wish that
You would just
Break me
Like a bird in a cage
When the magician
Makes it
Disappear.

Excerpt: Emanuelle Falls Out of a Tree

The morning Tony Corwyn saw an angel tumble down to Earth, he knew that he had somehow suffered a concussion or possibly some other mind-altering injury. He watched her hit several large branches on the way down from the top of an oak tree in his front yard. Above the noise of breaking twigs, he believed he heard her cursing, but then decided that if she was really an angel, words like shit were not part of her vocabulary. And he had determined that she was, indeed, an angel because of the large, long, white-feathered wings sprouting from her shoulder blades.

When she reached the ground, the angel quickly got to her feet and started pulling leaves from her hair and sticks away from her clothing. After a moment, she noticed that Tony was staring at her from his perch on the front step of his house. "What, you ain't never seen somebody fall out of a tree before?" she asked.

Tony only shook his head in response. The angel mussed up her hair and smoothed out the fabric of her shirt. A young boy riding past on his bicycle slowed and watched the angel as he rolled by. She gave him a nasty, curled-lip look, but he did not speed up again, fascinated as he was by her unusual looks. Her bright red hair was voluminous and curly, falling to the tops of her wings. She was pale-skinned but had no freckles. Her mouth was wide and her lips full. She stood five feet, eight inches tall on thin legs that were clad in dark blue jeans. The t-shirt she wore was a plain gray one. She looked out on the world with narrowed brown eyes. Tony shifted a little, and she looked to him again.

"Are you Tony?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied without hesitating, although he did not recognize her and could not figure how she knew his name.

"My name is Emanuelle Ives. I'm here to be your

guardian angel."

"What?"

Tony was just two inches taller than Emanuelle. His hair was short and dark brown; it came to a soft point on his forehead, a kind of muted widow's peak. Dull, light green eyes peeked out from underneath his bushy eyebrows. Despite his large ears and nose, he was not ugly. He had big hands with long fingers and a nervous way of twiddling his thumbs, which he was doing as he looked at Emanuelle.

"Are you deaf?" she asked. "I said I'm your guardian angel."

"Of course you are," he said, nodding slowly, wondering if she was dangerous or just the regular variety of crazy.

"Well, let's get to it."

"Huh?"

"Tell me about your life. Why do you need saving? All I got was a name and an address, so—" She turned in a circle, looking over her left shoulder at one of her wings. "Oh, Jesus Christ, I broke something already."

40

As Emanuelle proceeded to remove both of her wings, Tony cocked his head to one side and watched. The wings, although they were made of real feathers, were non-functional, nor were they attached to Emanuelle's body at all. Rather, they were held on by a type of harness made of clear fishing line. Tony knew that his mouth was hanging open as he looked on, but somehow he could not put his lips together. Emanuelle ignored his stares as she examined the damaged part of the left wing.

"Are you gonna tell me or what?" she asked.

"I didn't know I needed saving," he told her.



41

Lisa Garber
Cape Sounion, Greece
(Photograph)

Kimberly Neal

Epitaph

I am a wanderer.
Even in Death I cannot stay in one place,
So you may start your journey here,
But if you are looking for me,
I will be everywhere
Where Nature's beauty sears the world
Where the pain and sorrow slide in under darkness.
Look for me everywhere and speak.
I will listen.

Three Views

The past is a shadow
Sometimes unseen
But always lurking near

Optimism is the sun
That shines bright and clear
When clouds and night disappear

Pessimism is a raining mist
Not always bothersome
But confuses what we see

Professor Margaret Snow Houston

I don't know why you aren't here anymore.
I can't say I really understand it now. Somewhere you still exist, but it is lost in the lore retold over so many years. You knew that.

You tried to teach us so many things, but I'd trade it all to have you back. You could always teach me again, and next time, I'd really listen. I wouldn't stare at the wall lost in a daze.

Notes scatter my room with memories of you,
some scribbled, others neat. Fragments of a dream.
Everywhere I turn my mind falls back to you.
I'm lost in a time loop that never seems to end.

44

I walk out the door needing to feel something else
and knowing I won't find it there. Memories
bite into my heart, making it ache, but there's
nothing I can do. Why was my time so short?

I wander aimless, desperate for something to distract
me, but at the same time not wanting to lose what
little part of you I have left. It's so cold outside,
the clouds are heavy and the wind slices to cut.

I get lost in the trees, with nothing but cold air
filling my lungs. I sit on a stump, huddled in

my coat and turn to the forest, clean and bare.
I stare out, wishing for the pain to end.

Hills glisten with snow, white, fluffy, wet,
and I can hear your voice strike out in the
wind. I turn with my mind shaky but set
to discover the world you loved so much.

Dan Paraka

Breathe

Walk barefoot across wine and saffron-colored fields
Gentle breeze perfumed by an old familiar route
Choose a sweet happy tune
Remember what you forgot
Drink deeply of history and artist's magic
Disarm everyday complexity
In the surrounding stillness gathered for the occasion
Where did you go, where are you from
On the go, no problem, make your way
Look under every stone, add on a cairn
Tend the garden, keep remembering
Very little rest, very little left
Beg mercy, give thanks
Listen to sages of ages past
As you joyfully suffer the present

Marty Silverthorne

Hurr'cane Floyd

Who will clean up the dead?
Coffins rise and drift to Jordan,
pigs fly in the hurr'cane, the rainbow
God's broken promise. Tell
children whose mothers drowned
in the swollen stream to be water-
born believers or the mother from
Princeville whose son was afraid
of water and drowned and now his
coffin surfaces and floats downstream.
Let the water say come forth believers.
I will wash you clean.

Make Believe Boxcar

I have always been called to trains, Chessie,
Southern Seaboard, cars of coal or the pulp
mill run and its late night cry. Our home rattled,
trembled with loaded boxcars. Saturdays,
Daddy drank while Jimmie Rodgers yodeled,
I listened for Johnny Cash to sing about
the folks in the fancy dining car.

48

I put those dreams and need to roam to sleep,
An-ma and I help Chloe, our granddaughter,
snap her plastic train track in place, water tank,
trestle, cows lowing in a pretend carpet pasture.
She throttles the engine up the mountain,
straddles the track to make a human tunnel.
The engine smokes past her knees, she pulls
the brake, blows the whistle as it steams
through the sleeping town past the coal bin.
I have never been more drunk on train music.
Chloe shouts all aboard, An-ma and I hop
the boxcar, hobos on her imaginary train.

Margaret Mason Tate

20/20

two weeks to the day
that i decid'ed to leave you
after the m'nd'ight mirro~ball death rattle
of the holidays
i find myself
 writing
for the first time
in months.

 emily said
*you cannot have
a good relationship
and continue to write
good poetry.
it is why i cling
to men who don't love me.*

that's not true,
 i said.
it can't be.

it can,
 she said,
*and it is.
just you wait
and see.*

Thomas Heffernan

Concerning Liam (circa 1745)

Loft at Dawn

First light some spring days
Pleases soft on the air coming.
The thatch whispered, combing breezes
That climbed sudden as spring does.

Astray from coverlets
Bits of stiff broken-off straw pocked
The homespun clothes he woke in: he picked nits.
Time slowed; moved; collected Time's debts.

50

Grasses

Cover of new grass
fine as infants' hair
fingertips thresh;
flesh, grass, soft as air:
thread and wish.

Poem

What's a poem? asked a child
who lived half wild by a hedge.
The child's father couldn't work,
a forester once, all tall oak felled.

Listen to the shoot of aspen
shaking its head, Liam said.

Ronald H. Bayes

David Capps. *The Blood Doll Labyrinth*. Shakin' Outta My Heart Press, 2318 West Lakeshore Drive, Wilmington, NC 28401, 2008. 18 pp.; \$5.25 (including s & h).

Here are ten stunning poems. I'm tempted to say that David Capps is just who we've been looking for. His words are filled with power and deep understanding, of insight into The Human Condition, of clear analysis and empathy. In short, the blessings and "the horror."

Robert Penn Warren, first poet laureate of the United States, said "Pretty, hell. Poetry is life." David Capps' work embraces this understanding as well as worshipful wonder. An example from "White Sands" :

52

Where in this autumn, this cool makes pecan leaves
curl,
Whispers murder in thresholds—
Is your voice?

Capps is an original, like Robinson Jeffers, like James Wright. He embraces not only the realities of the natural but the possibilities of the supernatural. From "The Rapture,"

A woman's voice floats from the interior.
I walk inside. Everyone I have ever known is there,
Watching television in the center of an Oriental parlor.

His images are rock solid yet shudder with light, and with the weight he forces each to bear, as he terminates the chapbook with these lines:

We can tear through furious gravity
To a glacier blue beginning

I remember the river flash,
The murderous thresh;
Your voice diminish,
Turn.

Few contemporary anti-war poets can hold a candle to Capps. Examples: "We do not see// The Young Mother crawl past the cameras/ Carrying her left foot. The sandal still attached," and the equally insistent poem, "Ten Thousand Suns," where "Scalded faced sons of Kirkuk rub sand in their eyes./ Down in their brown fists the blood never dries." And where "Fathers pick their children's teeth from/ Cracks in paving stones."

53

While THE BLOOD DOLL LABYRINTH is a small book, I guarantee that you will never forget it and that you will join me in eagerly waiting to hear what David Capps will say to us next!



Jennifer Bruner

St. Andrews Snow

(Photograph)

Ryan Thompson

Winter

the rabbit runs fast
white bursts in the frigid air
signs of life descend

the wolf waits silent
white breath hovers above him
like ghosts trapped on earth

the snow conceals all
white illumines the forest
with help from the moon

Whit Griffin

The First of The Dew

Turn these scruples into a dram. Take
the fresh air cure and forget the nakedness.
The lion is naked. In such disaccord I'd

rather submit to scaphism. Honey, in any
other setting, would amuse the tongue; perhaps
on some of those biscuits, the size of cat heads,
your mother used to make. Does she still sing
in the kitchen? A dilemma, a promise of something

56

new: do I carry you through the rain into
safety, or do I leave you in the carriage
for the highwaymen? And in the shelter,
the faint odor of ammonia and black tea.

Under a dusty tarpaulin we discover a working
Wurlitzer, and the sun comes out,
only for the gloaming. A dying in the sky.

We'll accept what we're given and thank
the blind women who've toiled to sew
our bed clothes.

Peter McNamara

From The King of the World

I think about death often,
Though not so much about when I die

Or why.
I think more about how it will happen.

I feel like we all imagine our deaths
To be poetic, as kings and queens.

That stories will be written,
Stories that will be read,

Even taught.
That through our deaths,

The world will come together
And mend itself.

Religion will separate us,
While culture will bring us closer

And confidence in the global economy
Will be determined by those

That drop change
In the homeless man's cup.

I think about these things
When I think of you,

Because 'f I must leave,
This is the world I want left to you.

Just make sure there are laughs
And smiles all the same

When this world turns to you
To take over its reign.



59

Dustin Lisica

Curious George
(India ink)

60



Sarah Karas

You're Dead
(India Ink)

Joe C. Miller

Pain

's a four-letter word
that gets caught in the throat
and only washes down
with good booze

mercy and grace
are words heard in church
esteemed by the pious
reserved for the rich

press the delete key
exit stage left
not so long
not see you later
but good riddance
good golly
goodbye

Jason Mosser

Salvage

My brother and I drove downtown
to pick up a car from our Uncle Lou,
a rusted and busted red Ford Falcon
Lou wanted my brother to repair.
Aunt Betty invited us into the living room,
lit up by a Christmas tree,
and our Uncle Lou,
Navy veteran, World War Two,
the brightness of his promise
long since darkened by drink,
greeted us in one of Betty's old flannel nightgowns.
He was sick with cancer and he was dying,
and embarrassed and apologetic about his appearance,
and neither Cam nor I asked why or pretended to notice
but left quickly with the keys and our empty reassurances.

62

I drove the Falcon, my brother behind in the Buick,
and as we crossed the Washington Street bridge
the Falcon started to sputter and spew smoke.
So, casting rearview glances at Cam,
who was waving me on and shouting Go! Go!
I pumped and pushed and rolled the machine into the station.
And as the mechanic inspected its smoking carcass,
my brother and I just looked on and marveled
because nothing in our family ever worked,

and everything broke down or fell apart,
so we laughed the laugh of disaster,
then we wound down the hilly road home.

Bruce Whealton

The Ghost of a Poem

Monday night, up late,
and I cannot quite find
the poem in me.
It was just here,
somewhere around some corner,
in my mind,
haunting me.

I must call forth this apparition,
it is an exorcism I seek.

64

Will you stay?
Will you believe in me,
and my ghost?

I don't! But
the more I search,
the less I'm free,
the ghost is me.

Jake Anderson

Alexis Baker

Troy Baranik

Ronald H. Bayes

Jennifer Bruner

Kurt Fenderbosch

Bryant Ferrell

Lisa Garber

Gregory Gray

Whit Griffin

Thomas Heffernan

Debi Hobbs

Caitlin Johnson

Carrie Danielle Jones

Sarah Karas

Stephanie Kjelgaard

Dustin Lisica

William E. Loftus

Laura McDowell

Peter McNamara

Joe C. Miller

Liz Monish

Jason Mosser

Tracey Natoli

Kimberly Neal

Dan Paraka

Matt Poletti

Marty Silverthorne

Ben Solomon-Stephens

Margaret Mason Tate

Justin Thoby

Ryan Thompson

Bruce Whealton

Liz Windham

